



# Ovarian Cancer...

## What Women Need to Know

### What are the signs of ovarian cancer?

- When symptoms do occur, they are often vague and may not seem to be related to the disease at all.
- One common sign is that your abdomen gets larger. That's because fluid collects there and causes swelling. But the swelling is different than what you might feel during your period, when your body retains water.
- You might also feel pain or a lump in your abdomen.
- Other signs are abnormal vaginal bleeding or discharge.
- You might have stomach discomfort, gas, or nausea, which doesn't seem to go away.
- Pelvic pressure (feeling you have to urinate or defecate all the time).

### What adds to my risk of getting ovarian cancer?

- Your risk increases with age especially after age 50.
- Women who have never had children, or had their first child after age 30 are more likely to get ovarian cancer than women who have had children before 30.
- Women who are infertile.
- Having been pregnant or taking birth control pills seem to lower the risk of getting ovarian cancer.

- Your risk increases if you have had breast cancer, or if you have a family history of breast, colorectal or ovarian cancer.

### How can I detect ovarian cancer early?

- If you are 18-40 have a pelvic exam (recto-vaginal) by your doctor every 1-3 years.
- If you are over 40 have a yearly check up with pelvic exam (recto-vaginal).
- Pap tests are useful in finding cervical cancer, but they rarely find early ovarian cancer.
- Talk to a doctor if you have any symptoms or signs that suggest ovarian cancer. You may want to request that your doctor order tests. These tests are not recommended for routine screening. The tests may include:
  - ~ Ultrasound (transvaginal).
  - ~ A special blood test called CA 125 that checks for ovarian cancer tumors.

### How do you treat ovarian cancer?

- Doctors use surgery, chemotherapy, or radiation to treat ovarian cancer.
- Surgery usually includes the removing of one or both ovaries and fallopian tubes, and removing the uterus.
- If the tumors are found very early, doctors may remove only the ovary that has the tumors.

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This is especially true for young women who wish to have children.

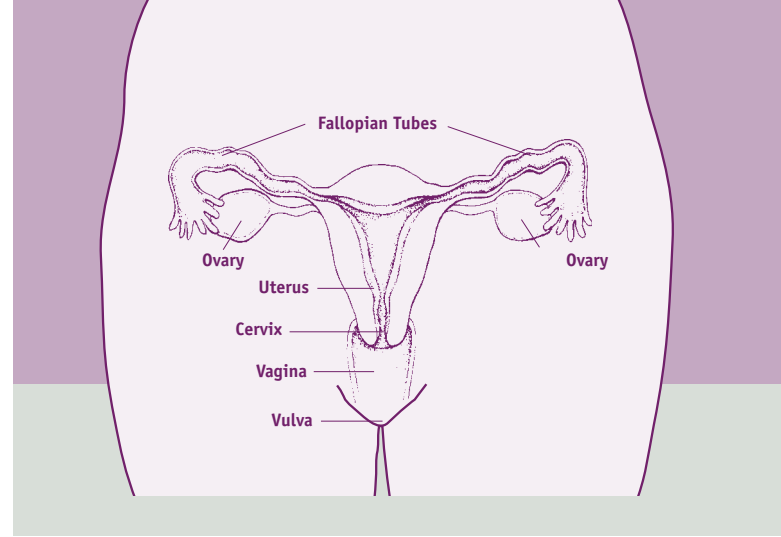
- If the cancer is far along, health care professionals will make every effort to remove all the cancer to give chemotherapy a better chance to work and help a woman's chance of survival.

## What are my chances of survival?

- If found and treated early, 95 percent of women live at least five years.
- Only one in four cases of ovarian cancer (25 percent) are found before it has spread.
- If the cancer has spread widely, the five-year survival rate is 28 percent.



**Women over 40 should get an annual pelvic exam. Younger women should have a pelvic exam at the same time as a Pap test for cervical cancer.**



## How many women will get ovarian cancer this year?

The California Cancer Registry estimates that 2,610 California women will get ovarian cancer in the year 2000.

Ovarian cancer is the second most common cancer of women's reproductive organs and the number one killer of these gynecologic cancers.

The California Cancer Registry estimates that 1,410 women in California will die from ovarian cancer this year.

*Source: California Cancer Registry (CDHS/CSS)  
American Cancer Society Facts & Figures 2000*

Additional copies of this pamphlet may be downloaded at Department of Health Services—Office of Women's Health web site: [www.dhs.ca.gov/director/owh](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/director/owh) or obtained by fax at (916) 653-3535.

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